

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 12225

LIMDIS

DOD FOR SECRETARY SCHLESINGER FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, FR

SUBJECT: FRENCH MOD BOURGES INVITES SECRETARY
SCHLESINGER TO VISIT PARIS

1. SUMMARY: BOURGES HAS INVITED YOU TO VISIT PARIS ON THE OCCASION OF THE PARIS AIR SHOW. GIVEN THE ATMOSPHERE SURROUNDING THE UNCERTAIN FUTURE OF THE F-104 SUCCESSOR SUBJECT, AND IN LIGHT OF BOURGES' OTHER PRIORITIES DURING THE AIR SHOW, I SUGGEST THAT YOU DECLINE INVITATION, BUT GIVE BOURGES SOME IDEA OF WHEN YOUR SCHEDULE MIGHT PERMIT VISIT TO PARIS. END SUMMARY.

2. AS THE FIRST ITEM IN MY MEETING WITH FRENCH MOD BOURGES MAY 13 (OTHER SUBJECTS REPORTED SEPTEL), HE ASKED ME TO EXTEND TO YOU HIS INVITATION TO VISIT PARIS ON THE OCCASION OF THE PARIS AIR SHOW (MAY 30 - JUNE 8) AT LE BOURGET AIRPORT IN SUBURBAN PARIS. IN EXTENDING THE INVITATION, BOURGES UNDERLINED THAT HE THOUGHT YOU WOULD BE INTERESTED IN THE AERONAUTICAL TECHNOLOGY THAT WOULD BE ON DISPLAY AT THE SHOW. HE ADDED THAT HE WOULD LOOK FORWARD TO HAVING PRIVATE DISCUSSIONS WITH YOU AT THAT TIME ON THE WHOLE RANGE OF POLITICAL/MILITARY MATTERS CONFRONTING OUR TWO COUNTRIES. IN EXTENDING THE INVITATION, BOURGES WAS UNDER THE IMPRESSION
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THAT YOU MIGHT ALREADY HAVE PLANS TO BE IN EUROPE AT

ABOUT THE TIME OF THE PARIS AIR SHOW. HE MENTIONED, FOR EXAMPLE, THE NATO DPC MINISTERIAL WHICH HE THOUGHT WOULD BRING YOU TO EUROPE. I THANKED THE MINISTER ON YOUR BEHALF FOR THE INVITATION AND TOLD HIM THAT I WOULD FORWARD IT TO YOU IMMEDIATELY. I SAID THAT, WHILE I WAS NOT FAMILIAR WITH YOUR TRAVEL PLANS, I RECALLED THAT THE DPC MINISTERIAL WAS SCHEDULED FOR MAY 22-23, A WEEK BEFORE THE OPENING OF THE PARIS AIR SHOW. BOURGES STRESSED THAT HE DID NOT WANT TO INCONVENIENCE YOU, BUT THAT HE DID WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT HE LOOKED FORWARD TO MEETING WITH YOU IN THE NEAR FUTURE AND THAT -- REGRETTABLY -- HIS OWN SCHEDULE WAS OTHERWISE ALMOST TOTALLY COMMITTED UNTIL EARLY FALL.

3. COMMENT: MY MEETINGS WITH BOURGES HAVE PERSUADED ME THAT HE IS IN FULL COMMAND OF THE SUBSTANCE OF FRENCH DEFENSE POLICY, CANDID IN HIS PERSONAL DISCUSSIONS, AND LUCID IN EXPOUNDING HIS VIEWS. I THINK HE IS A MAN WITH WHOM YOU CAN ENJOY A STIMULATING EXCHANGE OF VIEWS. CONSEQUENTLY, I HOPE THAT YOU WILL FIND AN EARLY OPPORTUNITY TO MEET WITH BOURGES -- EITHER HERE OR IN THE US. NEVERTHELESS, YOU MAY WISH TO DECLINE HIS INVITATION TO VISIT PARIS ON THE OCCASION OF THE AIR SHOW. AS FAR AS BOURGES IS CONCERNED THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF THE AIR SHOW IS TO SELL FRENCH EQUIPMENT TO FOREIGN PURCHASERS. GIVEN THE UNCERTAIN FUTURE OF THE F-104 SUCCESSOR SUBJECT, EARLY JUNE MAY NOT BE THE MOST AUSPICIOUS TIME FOR YOU TO MEET WITH OUR MAJOR COMPETITOR FOR THIS SALE, PARTICULARLY IN AN ENVIRONMENT THAT WILL BE HEAVILY CHARGED WITH "BUY FRENCH." MOREOVER, BOURGES' ATTENTION UNDOUBTEDLY WILL BE DISTRACTED TOWARD OTHER VISITING DIGNITARIES -- WHO MAY BE LIKELY CANDIDATES FOR FRENCH SALES -- THUS LIMITING THE OPPORTUNITY THAT HE WOULD HAVE FOR RELAXED AND UNHURRIED CONVERSATIONS WITH YOU. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, I RECOMMEND THAT YOU AUTHORIZE ME TO TELL BOURGES THAT YOUR SCHEDULE WILL NOT PERMIT A VISIT TO PARIS FOR THE AIR SHOW. IT WOULD BE VERY USEFUL, HOWEVER, TO BE ABLE TO GIVE BOURGES AN IDEA OF WHEN YOU MIGHT BE IN A POSITION TO ACCEPT AN INVITATION TO VISIT PARIS, E.G., AROUND THE TIME OF THE FALL DPC OR

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NPG MINISTERIALS. BY THAT TIME, THE F-104 SUBJECT HOPEFULLY WILL HAVE BEEN RESOLVED AND THE ATMOSPHERE MIGHT BE MORE CONDUCTIVE TO A CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE. OF COURSE, YOUR AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE TO VISIT PARIS ON THE OCCASION OF SOME FUTURE TRIP TO EUROPE FOR OTHER PURPOSES NEED NOT LOCK YOU INTO SPECIFIC DATES AT THIS TIME.

RUSH

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